

China and Beyond: Issues, Trends and Opportunities

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Author: Dr Patrick Fung, General Director of OMF International.

An unexpected challenge – a devastating snow storm

With high hopes for the Beijing Olympics, China started 2008 facing the worst winter weather in more than 50 years. Snow and ice had crushed houses, brought down power lines and crippled transportation across a wide swath of 10 provinces in central China. Hundreds of thousands became homeless. Millions were affected.

Culture joined forces with climate to compound the suffering. The Lunar New Year season witnesses the greatest migration of people on earth every year. This year, an estimated 10% of China's population, i.e. 120 million people headed home for the Lunar New Year. Worst hit were the Min Gong – migrant workers – millions of them from the poorer western provinces, employed in the eastern and southern seaboard factories producing 'Made in China' goods for the business markets around the world. With train services unpredictable due to atrocious weather and millions on the move, railway stations became crushing masses of humanity.

During this time, as many as 800,000 travellers jammed around Guangzhou (Canton) railway station. They could not make it home for the Lunar New Year family get-together, but their factory dormitories were closed for the holidays. Wen Jiabao, 'The People's Premier', visited the worst hit areas, urging calm, patience and hope, while calling on local leaders and factory owners to do all they could to alleviate the suffering.

What characterizes China is people, masses of people.

The study of Chinese people has always been challenging. Even though early researchers were aware that China had a large number of different tribes and peoples, there was generally no systematic approach to gather biographical data in the early 20th century. Some of the most influential research was a survey published by John Kuhn, a well known China Inland Mission missionary, who documented 100 tribes in the Yunnan Province in 1944.

Everywhere we kept finding tribes, many of whom we had never heard of, until our hearts were thrilled. On December 23 we tabulated the one-hundredth tribe! One hundred tribes in Yunnan! And two-thirds of these had never had a gospel witness.

In 1953, over 400 minority groups submitted to the Chinese government for recognition, of which 260 came from Yunnan Province alone. Since then many revisions have been carried out. In 1976, the State Council of the People's Republic confirmed 55 officially recognized minorities, comprising nearly 10% of China's population. Some of the largest minority groups include the Zhuang (18m) [1], Hui (10m), Tibetans (5m), Yi (8m), Uygur (9m). [2]

An unexpected joy - printing of 50 million Bibles

For many years, one of the greatest needs of the church in China was the supply of Bibles, the Word of God. Older believers still keep hand-copied Bibles which were very common in the 60s and 70s. However, Amity Press based in Nanjing celebrated recently the printing of 50 millions Bibles in China so far. The Amity Press, located in a 85,000 square- metre

factory, in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, caters to the mainland's growing thirst for Christianity. It was only in 1988 that Amity began its first full year of production with half a million Bibles printed. By 2009 it will supply an estimated 25% of the world's new Bibles- and most will be for domestic use. Amity is a partnership between a Chinese Christian charity and the United Bible Societies (UBS). Of the 50 million Bibles Amity has printed so far, 80% of them, Chinese-language editions, are sold through official churches within the mainland for as little as 10 Yuan (Chinese dollar) a Bible. [3] Though a non-religious or non-church organization, Amity has done something remarkable for Christians in China. The factory, with a 600-strong workforce of mostly non-Christian locals, is printing Bible in 90 languages, ranging from Slovakian to a broad variety of African dialects as well as 7 Chinese minority languages, including Lagu, Miao, and Yi. [4]

The Director General of China State Administration for Religious Affairs, Minister Ye Xiaowen, made the announcement on Dec 8 2007 in Nanjing that "Bibles printed by the Amity Printing Company (APC) will be provided to participants in the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing." [5]

With so many Chinese Bibles printed, one may wonder where are all these Bibles going? There are 55,000 state-registered Protestant churches in China and at least 4 times as many house churches. The number of Christians in China is estimated to be between 50 million to 100 million. Certainly, the church in China is alive and growing.

The Chinese Christian Council is also preparing for the Olympics. It has commissioned a special edition of the gospel of Mark with Han Duan's picture on the cover in preparation for the 2008 Olympics. She is a member of China's Women's National Football team and is a Christian.

Turning back the clock- the arrival of the first Protestant missionary in China

The 2008 Olympic Games are scheduled to begin precisely at 8:08pm on August 8, 2008. The Number "8" theme is of course chosen with special intent. It is a number symbolizing hope and prosperity in the Chinese culture. A big digital clock has been placed at the Tiananman Square showing the count down to the start of the games.

If we turn back our clock 200 hundred years, Robert Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, arrived in Canton on September 8 1807. As a matter of fact, the East India Company refused Robert Morrison passage on any of their ships bound for China or accommodation upon arrival, fearing that he would interfere with their unconscionable opium trade. Morrison set out on his mission of love, knowing full well he could not succeed alone. "Do you really expect that you can make an impression on the great Chinese empire?" a U.S. shipping agent asked him. "No, Sir. I expect God will," he said. As a trailblazer, Morrison spearheaded landmark work that others would benefit from and build on. He not only compiled the first Chinese-English dictionary but during his first 12 years in China, with the help of local scholars, Morrison also translated and published the first complete edition of the Bible in Chinese. [6] This was no small undertaking: no one had undertaken such an effort since the time Nestorian monks first came to China with the gospel 1200 years earlier.

While the overseas Chinese churches commemorated the 200th anniversary of Morrison's arrival in China with excitement and celebration, the official church in China did not demonstrate the same enthusiasm. A special symposium, entitled, "Symposium on the Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church." was held in Shanghai in November 2006, ahead of the Robert Morrison 200th year anniversary celebration. The conference was organized by the CCC/ TSPM. Participants included church historians, scholars, university professors and research specialists, altogether 150. It is important to pay attention to the speech by the President of the Chinese Christian Council, Rev. Cao Shengjie, who presided over the closing ceremony. He emphasized again the importance of the three self principles,

i.e. self-supporting, self-management and self-propagation. He commented that when Christianity first entered China, missionaries advocated that the Christian faith should replace or transform the Chinese culture. As a result, the Chinese church ideology and theology struck a "discordant note" with the Chinese society. He stressed that the Chinese church should take root in the Chinese culture and re-construct its own theological system.

Several important papers were presented at the conference. The strongest criticism of the early missionaries to China was the close connection between missionaries and companies that were involved in the opium trade. [7] Even looking at some of the early missionaries who were involved in medical work, including Dr. Peter Parker, the first medical missionary to China in the past 200 years, we see many were also key interpreters and negotiators for foreign governments in negotiating treaties with Chinese counterpart. This was partly because of their excellent language acquisition. Though most missionaries in those days vigorously criticized the opium traffic, very few however seemed serious enough to challenge the right of the British to compel China to open her doors. China was forced to give special privileges to missionaries obtained by force of arms of foreign nations. The opium trade, the opium war, the unequal treaties, particularly the treaty of Nanjing in 1842, made it harder for many Chinese to appreciate the love of Christ that had motivated many of these trailblazers including Morrison's perseverance and sacrifice.

The challenge of the Olympics

"One World, One dream" is the theme of this year's Beijing Olympic games. China certainly hopes that the Olympics will be a catalyst to continue its surge as an economic and global power. China is certainly going to show the world that she can do it.

To mark the seriousness of preparation for the Beijing Olympics, a panel of 13 specialists from the China Meteorological Administration, the Beijing emergency commission office, and other relevant units convened on October 19 last year to review the analysis of the potential meteorological disasters and hazards during the Beijing Olympic Games. The report included a study on the potential sources of weather-related disasters and hazards during the Games, an evaluation of these potential hazards and an analysis of the city's ability to withstand and control those hazards. According to the report, seven types of weather-related hazards may affect the Olympics: rainstorms, high temperatures, hail, high winds, dense fog, thunder and lightning, and haze. [8]

Determined not to let anything spoil the event, organizers of the 2008 Summer Olympics said that they will take control over the most unpredictable element of all -- the weather. While China's Olympic athletes are getting ready to compete on the fields, its meteorologists are working on the skies, attempting the difficult feat of making sure it doesn't rain on the Aug. 8 opening ceremonies. "Our team is trained. Our preparations are complete," declared Wang Jianjie, a spokeswoman from the Beijing Meteorological Bureau, addressing a news conference at the headquarters of the Beijing organizing committee in January this year. [9]

The Chinese are among the world's leaders in what is called "weather modification," but they have more experience creating rain than preventing it. In fact, the techniques are virtually the same. Cloud-seeding is a relatively well-known practice that involves shooting various substances into clouds, such as silver iodide, salts and dry ice, that bring on the formation of larger raindrops, triggering a downpour. But Chinese scientists believe they have perfected a technique that reduces the size of the raindrops, delaying the rain until the clouds move on.

Of course, we are reminded by Scripture that an ordinary man, like Elijah, prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land not for three and a half years, not just one day! Again when he prayed, the heavens gave rain. (James 5:16) So who is the ultimate weather modifier? Is it not the creator of the universe?

While China is busily preparing for the Olympics, churches from around the world also seem to be taking this unprecedented opportunity to prepare for outreach during the Olympics. However, there has been unhelpful high-level publicity about plans to evangelize at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Christian mission groups from around the world plan to defy the Chinese ban on foreign missionaries and send thousands of volunteer “evangelists” to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The level of enthusiasm does not necessarily match the depth of wise understanding. The Chinese tradition gives praise to those who are both “Yong”, courageous, and “Zhi”, i.e., Wise. Zealousness without wisdom often causes backfire.

In the past 12 months, the Chinese government have launched a massive expulsion campaign of foreign Christians, encoded Typhoon No 5. The campaign is believed by some to be part of the “anti-infiltration” efforts to prevent foreign Christians from engaging in mission activities. Whether this operation is linked with the Beijing Olympics this year is uncertain. Some of these workers had been serving in China for 15-20 years before they were asked to leave. This is probably the largest expulsion of foreign workers in the past 20 years.

It is important that we continue to pray for Christian professionals who have been serving in China long-term. Many of these are serving humbly in strategic places, making a significant positive impact on society, those who serve among the disabled, those in medical service, in vocational training for the youth, in teaching business ethnics, in poverty relief work, in AIDS prevention, to name but a few. Pray that they may continue to serve without hindrance. Pray also for the local churches. The spirit of the Olympic will give plenty of opportunities for local churches to reach out to the youth through sports. Pray for creative ways to reach out to the society.

Diaspora Chinese scholars and the Third Church

Statistics from 2005 from China’s Ministry of Personnel show that overall barely a quarter of Chinese scholars who have studied abroad returned. By the end of 2005, over 930,000 Chinese scholars had studied abroad with approximately 230,000 returning to China over the last decade. [10] In an effort to attract another 200,000 overseas Chinese scholars to come home in the 2006-2010 period, the Chinese government is making an effort to help these top scholars to lead research in the various fields back in China. [11] Many top universities in the UK provide scholarships for students from China who will eventually take up major positions of leadership in China. [12] The aim of many of these scholarships is to bring future leaders, decision-makers and opinion formers to the UK for a period of postgraduate study at a formative stage in their careers. Of course, we remember that former Chinese leaders like Deng Xiao Ping and Zhou En Lai studied overseas. According to statistics, around 60,000 Chinese students are in the UK at any one time - Over 52,000 of these students are studying at UK Higher Education level, around 6000 at Further Education level and the rest at Independent schools and colleges [13].

A mission scholar from OMF coined the term “*Majong*” theology to describe the recent phenomena of the Chinese diaspora movement. In response to the developments in quantum mechanics Einstein complained that God does not play dice- the universe’s physical functioning is not based on chance. Neither is its missiological functioning. “God is “washing” or shuffling the mahjoing tiles.”, he said. Mahjong is the classic Chinese game similar to a combination of playing cards and dominoes, in which the tiles are shuffled or washed after each game. From this, we derived the term *mahjong theology* to advocate diaspora ministry. In God’s sovereignty, God is “washing” the pack, and “shuffling” people from various ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds all over the planet. Just as God “shuffled” Rahab and Ruth into the community of faith at different points in history, so now He is shuffling the Chinese across the world. In Acts 17:26-27 we are told that God made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth and He determined the times set for

them and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us." So He still does this today as He did then.

Although it would be difficult to verify, it is estimated that nearly 10% of the Chinese scholars returning to China from the UK have become Christians. [14] One of the greatest challenges for these Christians as they return home is integrating back into the society with a new identity, their identity as followers of Christ. A clash of values would become obvious. Many of these "Hai-Gui" need support and encouragement to grow in their faith. Often the "Hai-Gui" do not fit well into the TSPM church or the House Church. Therefore, the phenomena of the "Third Church" has emerged over the years.

The Back to Jerusalem Movement

The BTJ movement is not a recent one. The original idea of taking the gospel "back to Jerusalem" was given to at least five different Chinese Christian groups or individuals during the 1940s. Mark Ma, Simon Zhao and Mecca Zhao were prominent pioneers. In 1942 Mark Ma was called by the Lord to go to Xinjiang to preach the gospel to the Muslims there. The next year the Back to Jerusalem band was formed with the goal of preaching Christ to the outlying areas of China such as Xinjiang and Tibet but also beyond - to the 7 countries of Afghanistan, Iran, Arabia, Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Palestine. Several Chinese Christians got as far as Xinjiang but by 1950 all activity stopped. Some were imprisoned. For nearly 50 years, the vision seemed to have died. But in 1995 Simon Zhao shared with house-church Christians in Henan his vision - and BTJ started up again on an even bigger scale.

In the past few years, the BTJ movement was actively promoted in the West and through a number of significant publications, including the popular book "The Heavenly Man." In 2003, there was the claim that a minimum of 100,000 Chinese missionaries will be trained and sent out over the next few years as a tithe of the house-church movement. This vision has generated a lot of excitement among Western churches and even huge donations in supporting this work. However, it is becoming apparent that the view that 100,000 missionaries are being trained for cross-cultural work is far from the real situation.

It is encouraging to note that church networks in several regions, including those in the South West and in the North-East have been actively involved in training workers for cross-cultural work. One South-West network has sent out 150 cross-cultural workers to serve among different peoples in China. Churches in one major coastal city are also actively involved in cross-cultural work particularly in the North East among the Chaoxian people. The number of cross-cultural workers being trained throughout China, though unverifiable, is probably in the range of hundreds not thousands. One North-East house church network has sent more than 10 workers to Outer Mongolia. Business platforms have also been used as a means of evangelism by some house-churches. While churches in the past have been focusing on training evangelists and church planters, now more churches are aware of the need for equipping believers, particularly the young people, for cross-cultural work. Curriculum are being developed and increasingly training materials are being prepared.

The other major need is the setting up of mission structure. Ralph Winter has claimed that one of the biggest failure of missionaries in the past 200 years is not church planting, but mission planting. The Chinese church will certainly be giving priority to cross-cultural work first to places within China and then in the future to places beyond China. There have been individual examples of missionaries sent out from China to the Middle East in the past few years, but attrition rate has been high because of lack of training and preparation and mission structures. Also, role models are very important. This is an area where God's people from outside China can play a role through sharing of experiences in cross-cultural mission work.

The dilemma continues

Many house-church Christians in China still find it difficult to register with the government or to attend the government-organized “Three-Self” church. Some official churches label house-churches as “cults” while others would quietly assist them. The divisions can still be very sharp. Older believers still bear the memory of persecution during the Mao era. However, for many younger believers in both the “Three-Self” churches and the house churches, the antagonism between them seems less intense. A large proportion of the younger generation did not have first hand experience of the persecutions during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s.

A young believer from Shandong wrote the following to FEBC recently which reflected some of the dilemmas facing those younger believers:

“I was born into a Christian family. I like both the “Three-Self” church and the house-church. Each of these has a different form, resulting from the national religious policy, and has different historical backgrounds. Each has its strengths, and the Lord allows them to co-exist in our country. When the Three-Self church found out my standpoint towards the house-churches, their attitude changed. The church began to reject me. I face attacks from my own church-rumors, gossip, insults and lies. The same situation has happened in the house-church and they have rejected me as being a member of the “Three Self” church.” [15]

However, there are signs that new approaches are emerging to tackle the divide between the house church and the TSPM. The Chinese government issued new religious regulations in 2005 which might make it possible for house-churches to legally register with the government and not under the umbrella of the TSPM. These new regulations are yet to be tested but certainly bring hope to the situation. The Chinese government may be warming to the idea that Christianity can bring a positive role in building a “harmonious society.”

One encouraging development in recent months has been a greater collaboration amongst China’s urban house churches. One example was an all-night prayer meeting on New Year’s Eve participated by several Beijing urban house church networks. The theme was “Revival for China and in Beijing”. Many of these house-church leaders have no political motives and have openly dialogued with the authorities in an attempt to alleviate their concerns.

No one can deny the tremendous growth in the Church in China. There is still a broad controversy regarding the total number of Christians in China today. According to some studies, in 1876, there were just about 13,000 Protestant Christian and in 1920 the number has grown to 367,000. In 1980 the estimation was that there were about 2 million Christians. By 2007, the official figure revealed a total of 17 million Christians in China. However, the general estimation is that there are about 70-100 million Christians in China today. [16]

1985	125,000
1988	250,000
1989	400,000
1991	640,000
1995	900,000

Just one example: According to the Religious Affairs Bureau of Jiangsu Province, the number of Christians in the province increased to 900,000 in 1995. In Beijing alone, there is an estimation of about 1 million believers.

The Amity News Service, which is the spokesman of the China Christian Council published the following more conservative figures in January 2008 on the number of Christians in China: [17]

	Number of Christians	Churches/Meeting Points	Ordained Ministers	Lay Workers
Total	18,017,750	32,000 churches 16,000 meeting points	2,600 (2,000 male) (600 female)	

While we rejoice in the numerical growth of the church in China, we need to be aware that this growth is not evenly spread among different people groups in China. The main growth occurs among the Han people in China. Many of the minority people groups including the Tibetans, Ughurs, Kazaks, Zhuangs and Yis, still have very little Christian presence.

Most of the local fellowship groups are able to meet freely without hindrance in recent years particularly in coastal cities. However, those in minority areas like Xinjiang, Tibet and some remote areas still face strict monitoring and restrictions.

It is estimated that there are approximately 6,000-10,000 fellowship groups in Beijing. Shanghai, one of China's most populated city, has approximately 400,000 believers. [18] Many of these believers in big cities are intellectuals that belong to the emerging middle and upper classes.

It has been encouraging to see the signs not only of numerical growth but also spiritual growth particularly the passion to reach out to the minority peoples. While great animosity occurred in the past between the Han and some of the minority peoples, it is encouraging to know some of the house-churches are starting outreach activities among the minority peoples. One particular network organizes short-term teams to bring young people to serve in the North-West during summer. Another group reached out to the Chaoxian people in the North-East. Another group worked among the minorities in the Yunnan province for 1-2 years.

Reaching out to scholars

There also seems to be a growing interest in Christianity among scholars and intellectuals in China. Reports after 1989 showed that as many as 10 percent of students on Chinese college campuses were Christian, but there is no way of verifying this figure independently. One university that actually polled its students anonymously was People's University, in the north of Beijing, Normally known as "Ren-Da" in contrast to "Bei-Da", i.e. Beijing University. A survey done in Renda, randomly selected, revealed a total of 3.6% of those surveyed admitted they were Christians, and some 60% of the polled group said they were interested in Christianity. Only 5% of those who expressed interest attributed this to contact with a church. [19] More than half, according to the survey, had acquired that interest through reading, lectures, and elective courses. Overall, many of the students thought it no longer a problem to be known as a Christian on campus. When asked why was there a growing interest in Christianity, the common answer was, "With globalization and post-modernity, we cannot find a clear value system and clear definitions and judgment. In this case, Christianity sets up an absolute value system [for us to think about]."

Some Chinese scholars have taken up a different approach to "Christianity" out of which the term "Cultural Christians" has been coined for a number of years. Many of these "Cultural Christian" scholars show interest in exploring recent Western Christian thought, taking into account China's historical and contemporary cultural context. As one Singapore Chinese

scholar put it, “[the aim] is to build a foundation for Christian intellectual cultural space, so that values systems of the “sacred” may have its own cultural capital.” [20]

There has been a lot of debate surrounding whether “Cultural Christians” are “Christian believers”. Some would have preferred to use the term “MCSC”, which means, “mainland Chinese studying Christianity”. Certainly, some of these cultural Christians profess faith in Christ. Yet, the majority of them do not identify themselves with any church or denomination and dislike being categorized as “mainstream Protestant” or “evangelical”.

It is appropriate to remember Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9, “To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”

Indeed, we are challenged to become “all things to all men so that by all possible means we might save some,” whether our contacts are farmers, peasants, migrants (min-gong), scholars or intellectuals.

One of the best national sellers in recent years in China was the book, “*A friendly dialogue between an atheist and a Christian*” co-authored by Luis Paulau and Zhao Qizheng. [21] As many already know, Louis Palau is a reputable evangelist with a global ministry. Zhao is a Chinese scientist, scholar and atheist. *A Friendly Dialogue* is an open and frank exchange on issues of faith, culture, history and politics.

We should continue to pray for Christian scholars who are able to dialogue with other scholars. We are called to love the Lord with all our minds, with all our hearts and strength. Perhaps post-modernity has forced many Christians to de-emphasize the importance of the mind in our faith. Reaching out to Chinese intellectuals and scholars demands our engagement at an intellectual level as a starting point.

The power of urbanization

One of the greatest challenges for churches in China today is the need of the “Min-Gong”, the migrant workers. It is estimated that there are 120 million “min-gong” in China today including some who are Christians. According to the 5th China’s National Census studies, along with the “min-gong”, the overall number of migrant children reached 19 million. [22] It is also estimated that every year nearly 20 million people in China migrate to cities from villages in rural areas.

What is it that characterizes the min-gong in China? Firstly, they have changed their main job from farming to urban work. Secondly, they still belong to the peasant category according to the government records, normally recognized as the lower social class. Thirdly, normally they are not employers but employees. Often their rights are abused by lucrative employers in urban cities. Fourthly, as they are considered rural people, this people group is often marginalized in the urban cities. Many young people leave rural churches and yet are unable to settle in urban churches because of work demands, cultural shock and other factors. Many rural churches describe their church situation as “huang-liang” meaning “desperate” as only the “old and the weak” remain. [23] Prior to 1980, church growth in China mainly occurred in the rural areas. However, since 1990, the urban church grew rapidly with the increasing urbanization in China. In 1949, the urban to rural population ratio was 1 to 9 (10.6% to 89.4%). In 1970, it was 1 to 5 (17.4 to 82.6%). In 1980, it was 1 to 4 (19.4 to 80.6%) and since 1985, it was 1 to 2 (36.6 to 76.3%). [23]

Many urban churches are grappling with the issue of how to reach out to these migrant workers. To most, reaching out to the “min-gong” is cross-cultural ministry because of the vast differences in cultural backgrounds and social situations. One of the positive outcomes of the urban migration is increasing partnership between Christian businessman and churches. Factories in urban settings create job opportunities and as well as opportunities to reach out to these young people. Partnerships also seem to develop between rural churches and urban churches. Some of the rural churches are taking proactive steps in sending their own pastors as “missionaries” to cities to reach out to the migrant workers. The opportunity of urban mission becomes tremendous.

Rapid urbanization and globalization have forced many church leaders in China to re-thinking ministry strategies. For the past 30 years, training of Christian leaders in China has by-and-large been focusing on evangelism, church planting and equipping of the Word. Little has been taught on mission or missiology. However, this scene is changing. More churches are beginning to think seriously of mission. They want to know more about sending structures, how to support missionaries, how to teach mission in Sunday schools etc. The concept of mission is also evolving.

One researcher described the 7 trends of mission ministry in China:

- from rural to urban
- from coastal to the inlands
- from reaching the grass-roots to reaching multiple social class
- from direct evangelism approach to integrative approach
- from receiving to giving
- from within the country to overseas ministry
- from territorialism to partnership

One of the potential contributions of the global church to the church in China is to facilitate indigenous mission movements. It is important to plant churches but it is even more important to plant missions.” [25] We need to facilitate what is truly indigenous and yet a biblical movement. The church in China is ready to take the step of faith. It is looking for role models, the integration of the word, deeds and character.

It is also important not to forget the many Christian students in universities in big cities. The early history of the Christian student movement in China is a glorious chapter generally unknown today. [26] The China Inter-Varsity Fellowship was founded in 1945. 168 young students from many universities and colleges met for a historic conference in August 1945 on the hills outside Chongqing. There was a unanimous agreement to form a permanent Christian student organization in China. A constitution was drawn up with a standing committee of 7 students and 7 senior advisors. A monthly bulletin was published. This conference marked the beginning of a revival among students in China. [27] Two years later, this became the largest Christian student movement in the world before it was closed down in the early 1950s.

Waking from the sleep

Napoleon once said, “Let China sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world.” In recent years, China has constantly been in the world news. It is also a country with growing economic strength. The label “Made in China” is not to be sneered at any more. Many of the latest IT gadgets including the I-phone are assembled in China. According to various reports, China has the 2nd largest number of billionaires after the United States. The total number of millionaires in China account for 3.3% of the whole population. [28] It is now the

world's 3rd largest importer after US and Germany. It is expected to be the world's largest economy if growth continues at its current rate. 33 million Chinese traveled overseas in the year 2007 alone compared to just 30,000 Chinese who travelled overseas at the end of the Cultural Revolution in the 60s. China has increased its participation in international organizations like the UN, ASEAN, APEC etc, brokered the negotiations in the 6-party talks with N. KR and will host the Olympics in 2008, the Expo in 2010 and many more major events in future. There have also been some encouraging signs in tackling poverty in the country. According to the Asian Development Bank and the UN report recently, 1 in 3 live in poverty in the rural areas in China in 1980 compared to 1 in 10 in 1990. [29] This is a significant improvement.

However, China is also facing some major sociological challenges. First the income gap between urban and rural populations has reached a critical level. It has been reported by the Asian Development Bank that China's Gini index, an indicator of income gap, rose from 0.41 in 1993 to 0.47 in 2004. [30] There is also great disparity of income between coastal and inland areas. Shanghai's GDP per capita is about 10 times that of Guizhou, one of the poorest provinces. (56733 RMB versus 5750RMB) [31] In what he described as an "epoch-making" move, Wen Jiabao, the Prime Minister, promised 339 billion yuan (more than 33 billion euros) over five years to improve the situation of 800 million peasants, i.e. 66% of China's population, and to curb social unrest. [32] In recent decades, the country's economic development has always focused on the cities; depopulated areas have been much neglected.

The Leaders becoming younger

The China Communist Party 17th Congress was held in Beijing in October last year. President Hu Jin Tao proposed the theory of "Scientific Concepts of Development" and was adopted as an integral part of CCP constitution. Some of the key words in the documents include, "socialist morality, clean economy, people orientated sustainable peaceful development". [33] Hu stressed that it was necessary to scientifically analyze the opportunities and challenges that China was facing in economic globalization, and the scientific concept of development should be implemented in the process of "industrialization, urbanization, marketization and internationalization". His earlier focus on "building a harmonious society" was not included into the constitution. Chinese President Hu Jintao said that the country must earnestly implement the scientific concept of development if it wants to attain various development goals set for the 11th Five-Year Plan period (2006- 2010). [34]

One major change in the Communist Party is the educational background of the party members who have been elevated to the top tier of government. The Party top leaders have been mainly engineers so far. However, it is no longer the case. Of the 10 new members of the Politburo (Politburo Standing Committee), only two are engineers; the rest have diverse backgrounds in economics, management, history and law. The two top leaders, Mr. Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang studied politics and economics respectively. Of the 20 provincial leaders appointed, only 1 was an engineer. [35] Another significant change is that the new generation of provincial leaders promoted by President Hu is on average five years younger than the existing provisional leadership, and many of them studied economics, management, history and law. Nearly 200,000 officials have been "shifted around" and promotion preference has been given to younger officials with experience dealing with poverty and rural development issues. [36]

A new social class

There is also a new social class rising in China, of nearly 150 million made up of CEOs of private enterprises, intellectuals who have chosen their own professions, e.g. lawyers,

doctors, accountants, managers etc. They represent capital worth of 100 trillion dollars and are 1/3 of China's tax base. The former President began to bring their influential segment into the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) with his "3 Represents" theory, i.e. the development of advanced productive force, orientation of an advanced culture, fundamental interest of the majority of the people. The "Three Represents" campaign is designed to ensure that the communist party extends its membership to private entrepreneurs.

With the rising of a rich middle class and private entrepreneurs in China, we also see a tremendous increase in the number of NGOs in China. It is difficult to estimate the number of local and foreign NGOs in China as there were no official records up to a few years ago. However, some estimate that there could be up to 1 million NGOs including those run by Christians. I was able to visit a nursing home run by local Christians in a mega-city. The need to care for the marginalized and the elderly is recognized. One Christian leader of a church from a coastal city shared with me the "A-F" vision of the church in reaching out to others: A (home for the aging), B(book ministry), C(church ministry- discipleship), D(drug rehabilitation), E(Direct Evangelism), and F(Family and marriage counseling). This shows a more integrated approach to ministry. While churches in the past were more inward looking, churches in China today are actively seeking ways to have a more holistic approach in ministry. Also, there are at least 120 registered Christian book stores in China today. Let us continue to pray for the Christians who can be "salt" and "light" in the society, impacting people and communities around them.

China and beyond- moving away from the centre

The word "China" means the Middle Kingdom. Certainly with the rising economic power, China once again is gaining the world's attention. The study of the Chinese language has become one of the most popular subjects in many universities in the West. Many Christians have high hopes for China- that the Chinese church will play an important role in the world's mission movements. While this paper has been focusing on China so far, it is apt that the title of the paper is "China and Beyond: trends, challenges and mission movements."

Some scholars such as Philip Jenkins and others emphasize a shift of power from Western churches to those south of the equator. [37] In contrast, Professor Andrew Walls, "a historian ahead of his time," [38] insightfully highlighted the concept of polycentrism: the riches of a hundred places learning from each other. He believes that there is no one single centre of Christianity or one single centre of missionary activity. He said, "One necessitates the other."

To quote Professor Walls further, "But the southern Christian lands do not constitute a new Christendom. Few of them have become homogeneous Christian states. Christian faith is now more diffused than at any previous time in its history; not only in the sense that it is more geographically, ethnically, and culturally widespread than ever before, but in the sense that it is diffused *within* more communities. It forces revision of concepts, images, attitudes, and methods that arose from the presence of a Christendom that no longer exists." [39]

The best seller in 2005, "The World is Flat" by Thomas Friedman highlighted the power of globalization. "The huge advances in interconnectivity that began in the 90s now allow unprecedented human interaction spanning nationalities, languages and time zones." [40] Globalization has certainly allowed a special window of opportunity for serious partnership in the kingdom business. "Interconnectivity" will become important in the future of missionary movements.

While we rejoice in the growing church movement in China and the strength of the China church, we should not forget the Lord is doing a far greater thing than in China alone.

Much study has been done on the Asian Missionary Movement. Research by Dr. Bong Ring Ro, a well known Korean missiologist, back in 1990 revealed a growing Asian Missionary

Movement. The number of Asian missionaries rose from 1000 in 1972 to 21,000 in 1990. Other reports suggested that Asian missionaries reached 67,000 in 2000. [41] Hong Kong sent out 376 missionaries in 2006 with 53% in cross-cultural work. [42] South Korea has sent out a total of 14,000 missionaries serving in 180 countries. [43] [44] Therefore the China missionary movement is only part of God's redemptive plan. Yet we are living in an exciting period of history as we see this plan unfold. We wait prayerfully and expectantly. We also participate and partner with others actively. We are called to serve alongside our Chinese brothers and sisters.

The church in China will continue to grow. Partnership with the world-wide church of Christ will be the key to seeing a vibrant missionary movement among different peoples. There is much to learn from the church in China particularly on suffering. Yet the global church of Jesus Christ also has much to share with the Chinese church: our experience in cross-cultural ministry, mission structures as well as equipping and training of cross-cultural workers. True indigenization is only meaningful when peoples from different tribes, tongues and nations, are serving together with mutual respect and a common purpose, that is, to be ambassadors for Christ. The potential for China as a sending nation in global mission is tremendous.

Coming full circle

The publishing of a small booklet, "*China: Its spiritual Need and Claim*", in 1865 marked the beginning of a significant mission movement in China, that is, the vision and commitment to bring the gospel to the inlands of China. Hudson Taylor, having just spent 7 years in China, felt the burden to challenge Christians in the West to pray for China and to bring the good news to the Chinese people particularly those in the inlands. He wrote his booklet with detail information on the spiritual needs of the Chinese people in the different provinces. No one could imagine the effect that this one man could bring. Lautorette, one of the most reputable historians in church history, commented on Hudson Taylor, "This one man [Hudson Taylor], frail in body and of no unusual intellectual powers, called into being a mission which, consecrated to one great task, the giving of the Faith to all Chinese who had never heard it, was to bear witness to the Gospel in every inland province in China.

Hudson Taylor wrote,

It is a solemn but truthful thought that our every act in this present life - and our every omission too - has a direct and important bearing both on our own future welfare, and on that of others. In His name, and with earnest prayer for His blessing, this paper is penned...The writer feels deeply that, as the Lord's steward he is bound bring the facts contained in this paper before the hearts and consciences of the Lords people. He believes, too, that these facts must produce some fruit in the heart of each Christian reader. The legitimate fruit will undoubtedly be - not vain words of empty sympathy, but - effectual fervent prayer, and strenuous self-denying effort for the salvation of the Chinese....The average population of the at least 7 provinces is 29 million and the average number of Christian workers only 13.

Beloved brothers and sisters, we cannot but believe that the contemplation of the solemn facts we have laid before you has awakened in each one the heart-felt prayer: Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do, that Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done in China? [45]

Today, we see a growing thriving church in China. Yet, the work is not finished yet. We pray that there will be an indigenous, mature and vibrant church movement in China reaching out

to others, those who are both near and far. Undoubtedly, the facts we have heard today should not result in just vain words of empty sympathy, but rather effectual, fervent prayer and self-denial for His Kingdom. I pray that each will ask the question, "What wilt Thou have me to do, that Thy name be hallowed, Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done in China?"

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Notes

- [1] The Zhuang are China's largest minority. The Zhuang are animists and ancestor worshippers. In 2002 scholars claimed to have discovered the birthplace of Buluotuo, the very first Zhuang. This has resulted in a revival of Zhuang culture and a renewed interest in ancient Zhuang religious texts.
- [2] Paul Hattaway, *Operation China*, Carlisle: Piquant, 2000.
- [3] South China Morning Post- Post Magazine Nov 25 2007. p. 28.
- [4] David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, Washington: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003.
- [5] United Bible Society Newsletter 466, Dec 13, 2007.
- [6] "A Call to Christian Professionals"- MSI regular bulletin, Issue 48, 2007.
- [7] Report on the "Symposium of the Missionary Movement and the Chinese Church" Jan 5 2007 www.chinese-protestant-church.org Chinese edition.
- [8] <http://en.beijing2008.cn/news/dynamics/headlines/n214181771.shtml>
- [9] -
- [10] XinHua News Agency January 5 2007.
- [11] Just in the year 2003, the total number of students and scholars studying abroad is 117,300, among which 3,002 people are state-funded, 5,144 employer-funded and 109,200 self-funded. In the same year, a total number of 20,100 students and scholars returned from overseas studying, among which 2,638 are state funded, 4,292 employer-funded and 13,200 self-funded. As for the geographic distribution of the overseas Chinese students and scholars, the statistics for destination in 2003 is as follows: 10.5% to Asia, 1.8% to Africa, 49.8% to Europe, 15.4% to North America and Latin America, and 22.5% to Oceania. Among those who have returned in 2003, 25.1% are from Asia, 0.2% from Africa, 42.7% from Europe, 22.7% from North America and Latin America, and 9.3% from Oceania. As for those who are still studying abroad, 22% are in Asia, 0.6% in Africa, 28.1% in Europe, 36.4% in North America and Latin America, and 12.9% in Oceania. (from China's Ministry of Education, http://www.moe.edu.cn/english/international_2.htm).
- [12] Oxford University produced 24 British Prime Minister thus far. The China-Oxford Scholarship Fund *China Scholars Newsletter* Sept 2005.
- [13] UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office/ China Scholarship Council: May 2007 Press Release http://www.uk.cn/bj/aboutnew_index.asp?menu_id=337&artid=2454
- [14] Paul Pruitt, A paper "Why we must engage in Chinese diaspora ministry?", 2007.
- [15] FEBC newsletter 2007.
- [16] <http://www.ccim.org/node/630>
- [17] Amity News Service, January 24, 2008.
- [18] Tony Lambert, *China's Christian Millions*, p.268.
- [19] David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2003.
- [20] David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, p.250.
- [21] For more information on the book, http://www.palau.org/media/press/friendly_dialogue_press_release
- [22] Nov 2007 "ChurchChina"
- [23] Nov 2007 "ChurchChina"
- [24] China's Statistical Year Book 1992.
- [25] Ralph Winter, who taught and researched in mission for 35 years, made the comment that "the most serious mistake in all of Protestant mission history is the failure of Western missions to create mission structures in the mission field. "The Challenge for Koreans and Americans Together", a lecture delivered by Ralph Winter, Seoul, November 2005.
- [26] This exciting story was chronicled by David Adeney in his book *Chinese Christian Students Face the Revolution* (out of print).
- [27] Leslie Lyall, *A Passion for the Impossible*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965, p.124.
- [28] http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2007-12/31/content_6361786.htm See also http://www.bcg.com/about_bcg/news.jsp
- [29] Speech by Wen Jiabao, Vice Premier at the opening ceremony of the International Conference on China's Poverty Reduction Strategy, May 2000.
- [30] Normally a Gini coefficient of 0.4 is considered to be an important mark beyond which there is a serious risk of instability for the country. The Gini coefficient is a [measure of statistical dispersion](#) most prominently used as a [measure of inequality of income distribution](#) or [inequality of wealth distribution](#).
- [31] National Bureau of Statistics of China.
- [32] Speech given by Wen Jiabao at the National People's Congress in June 2006.

- [33] China's Daily, Feb 25, 2008.
- [34] People's Daily Online March 6 2008.
- [35] Arthur Kroeber, "China Insight- Analysis by Dragonomics Research and Advisory"- 25 Oct 2007 No 45.
- [36] Arthur Kroeber, "The durable Communist Party", *China Economic Quarterly* Q1 2007.
- [37] Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom- The Coming of Global Christianity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- [38] In Christianity Today, February 2007.
- [39] Andrew Walls, "The Old Age of the Missionary Movement" first published in *International Review of Mission* 77 (January 1987): 26-32.
- [40] Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2005.
- [41] Tan Kang San, a case study of OMF International's involvements with Asian Missionary Movements: implications for mobilizing the Asian Church. 2000.
- [42] Reports from the Hong Kong Association of Christian Missions, 2006.
- [43] Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World- 21st century edition*, Gerrards Cross: WEC International, 2001.
- [44] Timothy Kiho Park, Luce Colloquium of Korean Christianity, "Korean Christian World Mission: The Missionary Movement of the Korean Church." Nov. 17, 2006.
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